

*University of Cape Town - Faculty of Music*

---

Aspects of style, form and harmony in the sacred music of Heinrich Schütz, with  
specific reference to his *Psalms of David* and *Geistliche Chormusik*

by

Peter B.Lambert

Cape Town, March 1995

---

*This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Music at  
the University of Cape Town.*

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

## ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, the sacred music of Schütz is discussed within the context of his contribution as a church composer during the period when music was experiencing the gradual transition from the renaissance to the baroque. Schütz assimilated the principles of composition which characterised the late renaissance, and applied them in a manner which at the same time reflected his own progressive approach to these established principles. This progressive nature enabled him to introduce the Italian *stile recitativo* in Germany for the first time, and it made him receptive to the use of the monodic style, which he also absorbed in Italy. He assumed an important role as a Protestant composer, and considered it of fundamental importance to expound the meaning, and thereby realize the aims, of the sacred text when set to music. His Lutheran background influenced his choice of text sources as well as his extensive use of the vernacular for his sacred music. Examples from his *Psalms of David* as well as the *Geistliche Chormusik*, are used to illustrate aspects of his contribution to music in Germany, and to music in general.

## *Acknowledgements*

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to

- my supervisor, Dr. Barry Smith, for his guidance, advice and encouragement
- all the members of my study choir, without whose voluntary dedication and effort I would not have been able to fulfil the practical part of the course
- my employer, Mr E.H.Graf, for everything he has done to make this possible
- my wife, for her support and encouragement
- Milton Abrahams, for typing this dissertation

## Contents

	<i>Page</i>
A. Developments in sacred music preceding Schütz's early work as a composer	1
B. Biographical summary	8
C. The significance of text in the music of Schütz	10
D. The <i>Psalms of David</i> (1619)	25
E. The <i>Geistliche Chormusik</i> (1648)	38
F. Conclusion	46
Bibliography	48

Aspects of style, form & harmony in the sacred music of Heinrich Schütz, with  
specific reference to his *Psalms of David* and *Geistliche Chormusik*

---

A. DEVELOPMENTS IN SACRED MUSIC PRECEDING SCHÜTZ'S EARLY WORK AS A COMPOSER

As the development of sacred music in the sixteenth century up to the time of Schütz constitutes a very broad topic within the still broader context of musical development in general, two aspects of sacred music will be focused on in briefly outlining musical conditions which helped to lay the foundation for Schütz's work as a composer.

*1. Elements of musical development as exemplified in the motet*

Many important developments in the composition of church music in the Renaissance were reflected in one of its major forms, the motet. The genre increasingly displayed features which foreshadowed certain characteristics of early Baroque music. As a music form, it offered the composer sufficient scope for innovative writing, as it was less bound by the traditional requirements of formal liturgical practice than the other important form, namely the Mass. The motet thus formed a major part of the output of many composers of the sixteenth century: 'The composers appear to have bestowed far more interest upon the motet than upon the Mass; from Willaert to Palestrina the mature late style of the *ars perfecta* was much more strongly developed in the former than in the latter'.<sup>1</sup>

One of the significant trends reflected in the motet was the increasing importance of the text in relation to the music. Important seeds were sown in the motets of Adrian Willaert (ca.1490-1562),<sup>2</sup> who in the early sixteenth

---

<sup>1</sup> F.Blume, *Renaissance & Baroque Music*, (London, 1975), p. 60

<sup>2</sup> Willaert was born in Flanders, but spent most of his life in Italy, and served as Master of the Chapel at St Marks in Venice from 1527-1562.

century cultivated a 'modern' style which emphasised the faultless declamation of the text.<sup>3</sup> As with the motets of Lassus (1532-1594), the declamation of the spoken word was taken into account with regard to rhythm, metre and form. A growing repertoire of metrical poetry was becoming available to composers,<sup>4</sup> in addition to liturgical and biblical texts. The choice of text therefore had to be made with the musical result in mind, even though this process manifested itself differently in different composers, as, for example, pointed out by the following comparison: 'It has been said that in his motets Palestrina must yield place to Lassus ... yet it might be fairer to say that each had a sphere in which he was pre-eminent: Lassus in the texts emphasizing the human element, Palestrina in those of a mystical or symbolic nature'.<sup>5</sup> The affective representation of words which was a feature of the Baroque, was starting to become visible in the increased use of word painting.

Texture and colour of sound were being developed by using various combinations of polyphonic voices. In the school of Palestrina (ca. 1525-1594), the use of sonority and the equal balancing of voices were cultivated, while with the Venetian composers, antiphonal and polychoral writing were employed as a major means of obtaining colour and richness of sound, such as in the works of Willaert, as well as Andrea Gabrieli (ca. 1510-1586) and Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1612).

During the Renaissance period, dissonance and harmonic structure were directly dependent on the way that the polyphonic lines interacted during the progression of the music, and loose harmonic structures resulted from the intervallic alignment of voices. 'The harmonic result of the combination of voices was conceived as a conjunction of intervals rather than as the unfolding of one chord'.<sup>6</sup> During the late sixteenth century, signs of chordal harmonic conception were becoming evident. In some of Palestrina's motets, for example, chordal harmonic passages alternate with traditional polyphony, such as in the following extract:

---

<sup>3</sup> G.Reese, *Music in the Renaissance*, (London, 1954), p. 372

<sup>4</sup> *Renaissance & Baroque Music*, p. 61

<sup>5</sup> H.Coates & G.Abraham, *New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. IV, p. 326.

<sup>6</sup> M.F.Bukofzer, *Music in the Baroque Era*, (London, 1948), p. 10



Example 2: Extract from *Benedixisti, Domine*, G. Gabrieli

Soprano

Be - ne - di - xi - sti, Do - mi -  
 thou hast been gra - cious, Lord.

Alto

Be - ne - di - xi - sti, Do - mi -  
 Thou hast been gra - cious, Lord, our

Tenor

Be - ne - di - xi - sti, Do - mi -  
 Thou hast been gra - cious, Lord, our

Bass

Be - ne - di - xi - sti, Do - mi - ne -  
 Thou hast been gra - cious, Lord, our God

Organ  
 Optional

Andante  $\text{♩} = 55$

mi - ne, ter - ram tu -  
 our God, un - to Thy

ne, ter - ram, ter - ram tu -  
 God, Lord God, un - to Thy

ne, ter - ram tu -  
 God, un - to Thy

ne, ter - ram tu -  
 God, un - to Thy

ter - ram tu - am -  
 un - to Thy land;

ne, ter - ram tu -  
 God, un - to Thy

In example 3, the tonality of B-flat major is unmistakable: the opening phrase (bars 1-4) is formed by all the notes of the B-flat major scale, and in bars 12-14, the second alto sings the actual major scale. The voices move in thirds in bars 28-29, each again singing sections of the scale, while the middle voice strengthens the dominant-tonic effect by adding the dominant seventh.

Example 3: Extract from *Jubilate Deo*, G. Gabrieli

Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1612)

U - bi - la - te De - o om - nis  
Ju - bi - la - te De - o om - nis  
...om - nis  
...om - nis

ne - di - ce - tur ho - mo, sic be - ne - di - ce - tur ho - mo,  
ne - di - ce - tur ho - mo, be - ne - di - ce - tur ho - mo,  
sic be - ne - di - ce - tur ho - mo, qui ti - met  
a sic be - ne - di - ce - tur ho - mo, qui ti - met  
ne - di - ce - tur ho - mo, qui ti - met Do - mi - num,

De - us, De - us Is - ra - el, con - ju - gat,  
De - us, De - us Is - ra - el, con - ju - gat,  
De - us, con - ju - gat, con -  
De - us, De - us Is - ra - el, con - ju - gat,  
De - us, De - us Is - ra - el, con - ju - gat, con -  
De - us, De - us Is - ra - el, con - ju - gat,  
De - us, De - us Is - ra - el, con - ju - gat, con -  
De - us, con - ju - gat, con -

<sup>1</sup> Vgl. Revisionsbericht Umrahlgatte II

Rhythm in renaissance music had been governed by the underlying, even pulse called tactus, which regulated the rhythm in a manner which was disguised by the free movement of polyphonic voices: In discussing the interpretation of rhythmic accent in early music, Donington points out that in renaissance polyphony, the accentuation follows only the natural shape of the phrase, not the underlying pulse.<sup>8</sup> This principle has also been described as follows: 'syncopations and accents were achieved by duration rather than by dynamic stress'.<sup>9</sup> The following extract provides an example of such rhythmic application:

<sup>8</sup> R. Donington, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, (London, 1974), p. 420.

<sup>9</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 12

Example 4: Extract from *Il dolce sonno*, G.Palestrina (Barlines added by editor)

The increasing influence of the text on the rhythms in motets such as those of Lassus, was indicative of the future rhythmic freedom and expressiveness of rhythm, where the rhythmic pulse would be used according to the idea being expressed. Reese refers to an instance where Lassus applies the principle to his use of rhythm: 'Slow and hesitant rhythms portray moods of mourning, uncertainty. Movements in equal notes with emphasis on the strong beat is found on words of promise or cheer'.<sup>10</sup>

## 2) Sacred music in Germany

The early part of the sixteenth century saw the first flowering of Protestant music in Germany. An important feature of Lutheran church music was the use of the vernacular, which was introduced in accordance with Luther's fundamental theological aim of enabling the ordinary member to understand the texts used, thereby facilitating and promoting congregational participation in the music. Luther himself was a keen musician, and was able to write hymn tunes as well as original German hymn texts, and also German translations of Latin texts. Initially the music of the Lutheran church was derived from two major sources, namely the Gregorian chants of the Catholic Church, as well as from pre-Reformation, mainly German religious songs.<sup>11</sup> The use of simple hymn-tunes, called chorales, was an important component of musical practice in Lutheran worship, and such chorales were polyphonically developed by the first major Lutheran composer, Johann Walter (1496-1570).

<sup>10</sup> *Music in the Renaissance*, p. 508

<sup>11</sup> A.Harman & A.Milner, *Man and his Music*, Vol. 2, (London, 1969), p. 61.

The mid and late sixteenth century were characterised by developments in both Lutheran and Catholic music, the latter being stimulated by the impulses of the Counter-Reformation. From 1545-1563 a special body, the Council of Trent, was convened to address the wrongs which were seen to have entered the liturgy of the Catholic Church. Music was one of the issues dealt with by the Council, and recommendations were subsequently made which aimed at restoring what the Council perceived to be worthy, unadulterated music for divine worship. Significantly, one of their requirements echoed the Lutheran belief that the words in singing had to be understood by all.

Following the initial manifestation of Protestant music, a transitional period occurred which saw an increase in the use of Latin texts in the Lutheran service.

By the end of the sixteenth century, German music clearly reflected the stylistic influence of two foreign models. Developing from the work of Heinrich Isaac (ca. 1450-1517) and Ludwig Senfl (ca. 1486-1542/3), the dominant stylistic force for most of the sixteenth century proved to be that of the Franco-Netherlands, and was most powerfully represented by Lassus, who lived and worked in Germany from 1556 to 1594. Two of his pupils, Johann Eccard (1553-1611) and Leonhard Lechner (1553-1606), became important Lutheran composers of the late sixteenth century. The Franco-Netherlandish technique was also very strongly represented in the work of Philippe de Monte (1521-1603), the leading composer at the imperial Hapsburg court.

The other major stylistic influence on German music at the end of the sixteenth century was Italian, namely the 'Venetian *stilus luxurians* which became the great determining new experience of German musicians in the days of Schütz's childhood'.<sup>12</sup> Amongst these musicians a highly prominent one was Hans Leo Hassler (1564-1612), who as a composer, contributed to the music literature of both the Catholic and the Lutheran church. Although his early work revealed the influence of Lassus, his direct contact with the Venetian school through his studies with Andrea Gabrieli, became very evident in his later works, which displayed his use of the polychoral idiom.

---

<sup>12</sup> H.J.Moser, *Heinrich Schütz, His Life and Work*, (St. Louis, 1959), p. 245.

Other composers who wrote in this German-Venetian style include Blassius Amon (ca. 1560-1590), who was the first German composer to use the double-choir technique,<sup>13</sup> and Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) who, like Schütz, studied with Giovanni Gabrieli.

Traces of the Roman style as exemplified by Palestrina, could be found in German music, such as in the works of Jacobus de Kerle (ca. 1532-1591) and Gregor Aichinger (1564-1628). The Roman ideal in composition was not one which composers simply discarded: 'the old style was not cast aside, but deliberately preserved as a second language, known as the *stile antico* of church music'.<sup>14</sup>

## B. BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Schütz was born in Kostritz in October 1585; the exact day is presumed to be the 8th. When he was five years old, his parents moved to Weissenfels where lived until the age of fourteen. His musical aptitude already showed itself during this period, and after the Landgrave Moritz of Hessen had heard the young Schütz sing on one occasion in 1598, he eventually persuaded Schütz's parents to allow their son to go to the Landgrave's court in Kassel, in the year 1599. There he served as a choir boy, which allowed him to become immersed in the practice of vocal music already at an early age.

After he had completed his schooling in Kassel, Schütz enrolled as a law student at the University of Marburg in 1608. However, in the following year, at the suggestion of Landgrave Moritz, Schütz left for Venice in order to study with the composer Giovanni Gabrieli. He remain in Venice until after Gabrieli's death in August 1612, and subsequently returned to Kassel where he worked as second court organist to the Landgrave. After his return from Venice, he had decided against pursuing a career in law, in spite of expectations to the contrary on the part of his parents. Following a request by the Elector Johan Georg I of Saxony for his services, Schütz left for

---

<sup>13</sup> *Music in the Renaissance*, p. 699

<sup>14</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 3

Dresden in 1615. From 1617 he worked as Kapellmeister at the Dresden court, a post which he, except for certain periods of special long leave, occupied for a period of fifty-five years.

Schütz paid a second visit to Venice in 1628, during which he absorbed the new developments which had occurred since his first visit. These developments were especially manifested in the music of Claudio Monteverdi (1567-1643), who was the *maestro di capella* at St. Marks at the time of Schütz's visit. In addition to his travels to Italy, Schütz also visited the court of Prince Christian of Denmark twice, namely during the periods 1633-1635, and 1642-1644. His last years were mainly spent in Dresden and Weissenfels, and he died in Dresden on 6 November 1672.

The major existing works composed by Schütz are:

- 1) *Italian Madrigals* (1611-1612)
- 2) *Psalms of David* (1619)
- 3) *Resurrection History* or *Easter oratorio* (1623)
- 4) *Cantiones sacrae* (1625), a collection of motets
- 5) *Symphoniae sacrae*, parts I (1629), II (1647) and III (1650), consisting of *concertato* pieces for voices and instruments.
- 6) *Kleine geistliche Konzerte* (1636-1639), comprising pieces written for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment, or for small solo ensembles.
- 7) *Geistliche Chormusik* (1648)
- 8) *The Seven Words on the Cross* (1664), an oratorical, dramatic work
- 9) *Christmas Oratorio* (1664)
- 10) Three Passions according St. John (1665), St. Matthew and St. Luke (both 1666)

### C. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEXT IN THE MUSIC OF SCHÜTZ

When one considers the fact that Schütz, despite an extremely long and productive career as a composer, is not known to have written music for purely instrumental performance, one already senses the importance which text must have held for him. Schütz proved himself to be a composer who throughout his life remained receptive to new developments in music, and also contributed to such developments even at a very advanced age. It is highly significant, therefore, that such a versatile and flexible composer chose to focus his artistic creativity on the only medium capable of verbal expression in music, namely the human voice.

Already in his youth days in Kassel, Schütz was exposed to influences which helped to shape his perception of the function of the word in music. His mentor, the Landgrave Moritz, a very competent composer, worked on the Reformed Church hymnal, which entailed the individual setting of each psalm according to the metre of the text. During the performance of these psalms, special attention was given to the declamation of the words, while the actual singing was seen to have a supportive function. Moser comments on this as follows: 'We can understand how this atmosphere must have paved the way for Schütz's relation to the Word'.<sup>15</sup> It would have been inevitable that such an influential figure as the Landgrave, who, combined with his acknowledged skill as a composer, also translated comedies and tragedies of classical antiquity, wrote extensively on the theory of poetry and began a German rhetoric,<sup>16</sup> would have made a deep impression on the young Schütz, who himself was endowed with a special talent for languages.

Schütz's educational experiences in Italy formed another important influence on the way he treated text in his compositions. His first such experience consisted of a four-year period of study with Giovanni Gabrieli in Venice. Moser quotes the following passage which refers to the manner in which Gabrieli's text-settings was developing at the time when Schütz was studying with him: '... the later ... [motet] is thoroughly saturated with manifold

---

<sup>15</sup> *Heinrich Schütz, His Life and Work*, p. 37

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34

sentiments suggested by the text. Every word has its independent significance for this manner of composition ... Here for the first time [Schütz] comes in contact with the fully developed new textual interpretation and its musical possibilities ...<sup>17</sup> Although Schütz demonstrated his total mastery of the compositional techniques in Italy, including the pictorial representation of the text, in his *Italian Madrigals*, his own development and extension of these principles were to be revealed in his works which followed after this, the first major one being the *Psalms of David* published in 1619.

During his second visit to Venice in 1628, Schütz came under the influence of Monteverdi, and also came into contact with the music of Alessandro Grandi (ca. 1575-1630). By this time, the expression and declamation of words in music had become even more important, for the dramatic element of speech rhetoric had become a prominent feature of Italian composition.

The other important factor which helped to determine Schütz's approach to the text was his Lutheran persuasion, which is reflected in the fact that the vast majority of his texts are in the German language. A certain parallel can be observed in this regard: Schütz has been described as a universal composer, and this universality can be seen to have two facets. One facet is the religious one, in that although he was a Protestant composer, his religious tolerance allowed him to occasionally approach a Catholic spirit in his music.<sup>18</sup> The other facet is a nationalist one, represented by his receptiveness to stimuli from outside Germany, notably that of Italy. The parallel seen here is that Schütz's extensive use of German texts in his compositions, similarly represents two facets of his contributions to sacred music in Germany. Firstly, he contributed on a religious level in that he considerably expanded and elevated the repertoire of German Protestant music. Rifkin sums up this achievement as follows: '... his music constitutes the ultimate realization of Luther's endeavours to establish the vernacular as a literary and liturgical language, and embodies the Protestant and humanist concept of *musica poetica* in

---

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61

<sup>18</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 89

perhaps its most perfect form'.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, he contributed in a German nationalist sense in that he chose to use German texts even in those works which embodied the fruits of his personal and extensive study of Venetian trends in composition. With regard to his first visit to Venice, if one discounts the *Italian Madrigals*, which served more or less as a graduation work after his first two years of study with Gabrieli, one can see evidence of this in the *Psalms of David*, which only uses German texts. In respect of Schütz's second visit to Venice, the influence of which can be seen in his three volumes of *Symphoniae Sacrae*,<sup>20</sup> he uses German texts for two of the three volumes.

Schütz's almost exclusive preference for Biblical texts is also indicative of his Lutheran approach to the word in music. As Fain points out, the Bible and particularly its interpretation by the individual believer, formed a vital element of Luther's theological teaching. In setting a Biblical text to music, the composer assumed a priestlike authority to illuminate and interpret that portion of scripture. 'For Schütz, the interpretation of scripture through his art was the most important of spiritual and liturgical responsibilities'.<sup>21</sup> From various comments in Schütz's writings, it is evident that Schütz the believer was not separated from Schütz the composer. He says, for example, in his foreword to the second book of *Symphoniae Sacrae*: '... when I had come for the second time to Italy ... I composed, in conformity with the insignificant talent God has lent me ... a little Latin work ...'. A little further on, he says '... and, after a bold beginning, I accordingly finished the same at length, with God's help, together with other works of mine ...'<sup>22</sup>

In order to demonstrate various features of Schütz's portrayal of the text in his music, examples have been chosen from the *Psalms of David* of 1619, as well as the *Geistliche Chormusik* of 1648.

---

<sup>19</sup> J.Rifkin, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Volume 17, p. 20

<sup>20</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 91

<sup>21</sup> J.Fain, *Text-setting in the music of Heinrich Schütz*, (Choral Journal, USA, 1987), p. 7

<sup>22</sup> O.Strunk (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History: The Baroque Era*, (New York, 1965), p. 76

A fundamental characteristic of his poetic expressiveness in music, is the imitation of rhetorical speech, i.e. the spoken gesture. One way in which he achieves this is by allowing the contours of his melodic lines to follow the ascending and descending patterns of natural speech declamation.<sup>23</sup> Schütz then develops this basic element by employing notes of longer duration, melismas and coloratura passages.<sup>24</sup>

Example 5: Extract from *Psalm 23*, Heinrich Schütz

**Soloists**

**Choir**

The opening words 'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want' are declaimed by the soloists who form Choir 1, in the speech-like manner of recitative. Only the soloists sing these opening words in this rhetorical manner; when the choir sings the same words, a more flowing rhythm is introduced.

<sup>23</sup> *Text-setting in the Music of Heinrich Schütz*, p. 6

<sup>24</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. p. 20

In example 6, the declamation by the soloists includes a coloratura run on 'frischen' (fresh), which is a descriptive reference to the refreshing, invigorating properties of the water.

Example 6: Extract from *Psalm 23*, Heinrich Schütz

(Voz sola.)

Er weidet mich auf einer grünen Au - en und führet mich zum fri - - schen Was - - ser, er

(Voz sola.)

Er weidet mich auf einer grünen Au - en und führet mich zum fri - - schen Was - - ser, er

The imitation of the spoken gesture is also achieved by using the rhythm of the text in its spoken form to determine the musical rhythm, such as in the following example, where the rhythmic effect of the words is emphasised by the use of stretto between the tenor voice and the rest of the choir:

Example 7: Extract from *Verleih uns Frieden gnädiglich*, Heinrich Schütz

22

strei - ten, der für uns könn.te strei - ten, der für uns könn.te

strei . ten, der für uns könnte strei . ten, denn du, unser Gott, al . lei . - der

strei . ten, der für uns könnte strei . ten, denn du, unser Gott, al . lei . - der

ten, der für uns könn.te strei . - - .ten, der für uns könn.te strei . - - .

strei . ten, der für uns könn.te strei . ten, denn du, unser Gott, al . lei . - -

strei . ten, der für uns könnte strei . ten, denn du, unser Gott, al . lei . - -

strei . ten, der für uns könnte strei . ten, denn du, unser Gott, al . lei . - -

strei . ten, der für uns könnte strei . ten, denn du, unser Gott, al . lei . - -



- 2) Surging and suspending motives form the second basic type in the music of Schütz, which he utilises for the purpose of text declamation. This can be seen in the doxology of Psalm 100, where the soprano voices declaim the words 'Glory be to the Father' on a surging motive. The upward surge is enhanced by starting the word with rapid, short notes, and then by suddenly holding it in suspense on longer note values, as for example on the words 'und dem Sohn' ('and to the Son'). A surge is once again created in the phrase 'and to the Holy Ghost', and the idea is repeated three times. The surging and suspending motive again appears in the repeated 'amen' which closes the psalm.

Example 10: Extract from *Psalm 100*, Heinrich Schütz

The musical score consists of four systems, each with five staves. The lyrics are as follows:

System 1:  
 Soprano: und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für. Eh. re, Eh. re sei dem Va. ter,  
 Alto: und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.  
 Tenor: und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.  
 Bass: und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.  
 Continuo: und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.

System 2:  
 Soprano: für, und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für. Eh. re, Eh. re sei dem Va. ter,  
 Alto: für, und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.  
 Tenor: für, und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.  
 Bass: für, und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.  
 Continuo: für, und sei. ne Wahrheit für und für.

System 3:  
 Soprano: Eh. re sei dem Va. ter und dem Sohn und auch dem heil. gen Gei.  
 Alto: und dem Sohn und auch dem heil. gen Gei.  
 Tenor: und auch dem heil. gen Gei.  
 Bass: und auch dem heil. gen Gei.  
 Continuo: und auch dem heil. gen Gei.

System 4:  
 Soprano: Eh. re sei dem Va. ter und dem Sohn, dem  
 Alto: und dem Sohn, dem  
 Tenor: und dem Sohn, dem  
 Bass: dem  
 Continuo: dem

- 3) The third fundamental device used by Schütz is the rising motive, which he associates with thoughts of resurrection and the afterlife. His motet *So fahr ich hin zu Jesu Christ* opens with an ascending motive on





Example 13: Extracts from *Psalm 121*, Heinrich Schütz

Hülfe kömmt von Herren, mel, ne Hülfe kömmt von Herren, der Him-mel und Er-den ge-

macht hat, der Him-mel und Er-den ge macht hat.

der Himmel und Er-den ge-macht hat, der Himmel,

der Himmel und Er-den ge-macht hat, der Himmel,

der Himmel und Er-den ge-macht hat, der Himmel,

der Himmel und Er-den ge-macht hat, der Himmel,

At this point, it would be interesting to look at one or two examples of how Schütz's teacher, Giovanni Gabrieli, uses such motives. In *Signor, le tue man sante*, the first of his two spiritual madrigals - which apparently are the only such madrigals which he composed - he uses an ascending-descending motive on the words 'Thou who made the heavens, a mortal veil not spurning', depicting the concept of the almighty Creator of the heavens lowering Himself in the form of a mortal, earthly body.

Example 14: Extract from *Signor, le tue man sante*, G. Gabrieli

O cre-a-tor del cie-lo, Gia-a-sco-so in mor-tal ve-lo, Ri-nu-va, ri-no-va, Thou-who made the heav-ens, A-mor-tal veil not spurning, Re-new Thou, re-new Thou

The second spiritual madrigal, *Vergine il cui figliol*, provides an example of the surging motive, followed by the rising motive, on the words 'in glory ascending to heaven above'.

Example 15: Extract from *Vergine il cui figliol*, G. Gabrieli

il cui fi-gliol glo-rio-so a-sce-se in glo-ry as-cend-ed

se A l'al-to ciel, ed To heav'n a-bove, se A l'al-to ciel, ed To heav'n a-bove, A l'al-to ciel, d'on-de whence He A l'al-to ciel, d'on-de whence A l'al-to ciel, d'on-de whence

*Comparison: two settings of the same text by Schütz*

In the following analysis, two settings of 'Die mit Thränen saen' ('They that sow in tears') by Schütz will be compared in the light of the textual influence on the music. As the one setting (SWV 42) is from the *Psalms of David* and the other (SWV 378) from *Geistliche Chormusik*, a period of nearly thirty years separate them as far as their date of publication is concerned. There may, however, not necessarily have been exactly that length of time between the dates of actual composition, as certain pieces in both the *Psalms of David* and *Geistliche Chormusik* were probably composed over a number of years prior to their publication in 1619 and 1648 respectively.<sup>27</sup>

The text of the two pieces is taken from Psalm 126, and both have been composed as motets. Schütz scored the earlier piece, SWV 42, for double-chorus comprising voices and instruments, as well as basso continuo; SWV 378 on the other hand, is scored for five-part choir with basso continuo. In both motets the overall form has been determined by the text, in that there are distinct sections of thematic material which are linked to the various ideas in the text. These thematic sections may be outlined as follows:

SWV 42

- A - Die mit Thränen säen
- B - werden mit Freuden ernten
- C - Sie gehen hin und weinen
- D - und tragen edlen Samen
- E - und kommen mit Freuden
- F - und bringen ihre Garben
- E - und kommen mit Freuden
- F - und bringen ihre Garben

SWV 378

- A - Die mit Thränen säen
- B - werden mit Freuden ernten
- A - Die mit Thränen säen
- B - werden mit Freuden ernten
- C - Sie gehen hin und weinen
- D - und tragen edlen Samen
- E - und kommen mit freuden und bringen ihre Garben
- D - und tragen edlen Samen
- E - und kommen mit Freuden
- D - und tragen edlen Samen
- E - und kommen mit Freuden

<sup>27</sup> P.Steinitz, *New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. V, p. 666

The opening two words 'Die mit' are given the same rhythmic character in both pieces, namely a dotted semibreve followed by a minim. The text phrase 'Die mit Thränen säen' is presented by contrapuntally moving voices which enter in stretto. In both cases Schütz uses long notes or melismas on the words 'Thränen' ('tears') and 'säen' ('sow') to emphasize the weariness associated with these words. This is especially effective in the repetitive, drawn-out settings of 'säen' in SWV 378. An ascending figure is used in both versions of 'Thränen', which conveys the wailing effect associated with the tears.

Example 16a: Extract from *SWV 42*, Heinrich Schütz

Voce. (Cantus.) Die mit

Trombone. Die mit Thränen säen, mit Thränen

Voce. (Tenor.) Die mit Thränen

Trombone. Die mit Thränen säen, mit Thränen

Trombone. Die mit Thränen säen,

Example 16b: Extract from *SWV 378*, Heinrich Schütz

Die mit Thränen säen, werden mit

Die mit Thränen säen, werden mit

Die mit Thränen säen, werden mit

Die mit Thränen säen, werden mit

With the appearance of the next thematic section on the words 'werden mit Freuden ernten', the new idea is expressed not only with a new melodic line, but also by the use of a contrasting rhythm in the case of SWV 378, and thirdly by the chordal writing in both pieces which contrasts with the preceding contrapuntal lines. Although only SWV 42, by virtue of its scoring, features antiphonal writing through-out, Schütz utilises this text passage to produce a quasi-antiphonal effect in SWV 378, by alternating the higher and lower voices in answer to one another.







Example 20b: Extract from *SWV 378*, H. Schütz

ben, und bringen ih. re Gar. ben, ih. re Gar. ben, und kommen mit  
 ben, und bringen ih. re, ih. re Gar. ben, und kommen mit Freuden und bringen ih. re Gar. ben,  
 Gar. ben, ih. re Gar. ben, und kommen mit Freuden und bringen ih. re Gar. ben, und kommen mit  
 und bringen ih. re, ih. re Gar. ben, ih. re  
 Freu. den und bringen ih. re Gar. ben, und bringen ih. re, ih. re Gar. ben, ih. re Gar. ben.  
 und bringen ih. re Gar. ben, und bringen ih. re Gar. ben, ih. re Gar. ben.  
 Freu. den und bringen ih. re Gar. ben, und bringen ih. re, ih. re Gar. ben, ih. re Gar. ben.  
 Gar. ben, und bringen ih. re, ih. re Gar. ben.

Having observed the musical exposition of the text in Schütz's two pieces, one is able to see the common influence of the text in their form, rhythmic character, melodic lines and harmonic features. The comparison of the two settings of 'Die mit Thränen saen' bears testimony, like so many of his works, of how Schütz is guided by the text in his conception of musical ideas, the shape which he moulds them into, and the detailed features with which he characterises them.

D. THE *PSALMS OF DAVID* (1619)

Schütz published the *Psalms of David* in 1619, when he was thirty-three years old and serving as the Court Kapellmeister to the Elector Johan Georg of Saxony. One could reasonably assume that the work must have held a special significance for him, both as a composer as well as personally. As Schütz's Opus 2, it represented his first major publication following his academically inspired Opus 1, which he had produced while studying with Gabrieli eight years earlier. At the same time, it represented his first major contribution to German church music. On a personal level, he chose to associate the publication of the work with his own wedding, the date

of which coincided with that of the preface to the *Psalms of David*. His desire to make others aware of this association was demonstrated by the fact that he issued copies of the *Psalms* along with his wedding invitations. If one considers, therefore, that Schütz's marriage, which appeared to be a very happy one, ended a mere six years later when his wife died at the age of twenty-four, and that at her funeral it was said of her that she had 'committed to memory many psalms of David',<sup>28</sup> one could well imagine that Schütz must have placed considerable sentimental value on this work.

Six years before the publication of the *Psalms of David*, Schütz had returned to Germany from his first visit to Venice. By studying compositional technique in Italy, he had been perpetuating the tendency among German composers who, already from the time of Hassler, sought to round off their education in Italy (Bukofzer, p.83). Even during the period in which Schütz was in Venice, another young German composer, Christof Clemsee also studied with Gabrieli. The latter composer was highly sought after as a teacher, and his reputation drew many German musicians, among others, to St. Mark's. He is described by Moser as the 'greatest authority in the musical world of the time' (p.65). The high regard which Schütz had for Gabrieli, is evident from various comments made by Schütz himself. He stated in his dedication of the first volume of *Symphoniae Sacrae*: '... I had passed the novitiate of my art under the great Gabrieli - Gabrieli, immortal gods, how great a man! If loquacious antiquity had seen him ... it would have set him above Amphions ... so great was he in the art of awakening the modes'.<sup>29</sup> It is believed that Gabrieli on numerous occasions used Schütz as his substitute at the church services,<sup>30</sup> which, in addition to the fact that the Italian composer on his death-bed gave one of his rings to the twenty-six year old Schütz, tends to indicate that this high regard was mutual.

A prominent feature which bears testimony of the Venetian influence in the *Psalms of David* is Schütz's use of the polychoral style. He varies the use of choral forces in this work by scoring the pieces for two, three or four

---

<sup>28</sup> *Heinrich Schütz, His Life and Work*, p. 102

<sup>29</sup> *Source Readings in Music History*, p. 73

<sup>30</sup> *Heinrich Schütz, His Life and Work*, p. 56

choirs, with instrumental support. This 'concerto style' of writing, together with the use of Psalm texts, had mainly been practised in Venice prior to the time of Schütz's *Psalms*, and those German works which had reflected the influence of the polychoral style, had not been developed on such a large scale as this work was. Gabrieli had in the earlier part of his career, written extensively in the style which cultivated the use of *cori spezzati* or divided choirs.<sup>31</sup> Significantly enough, the use of this style was particularly suited to the setting of psalms, which lent themselves to antiphonal writing.<sup>32</sup> One of Gabrieli's predecessors, the composer Adrian Willaert, had already in his time as *maestro di capella* at St. Mark's in Venice, composed psalm settings known as *salmi spezzati* or broken psalms, which were performed by two choirs, each of which occupied one of the two choir-lofts at St. Marks. The style of writing for alternating choirs introduced into music the elements of space and contrast, as well as the use of echo effects.<sup>33</sup> Sonorities of particular richness and brilliance were obtained, and Gabrieli also employed antiphonal writing to enhance textual expression, for example to illustrate opposing concepts such as height and depth, or light and shade.<sup>34</sup>

Another important element in the development of the polychoral style by Giovanni Gabrieli had been his use of instruments. He had been fortunate enough to have at his disposal a group of instrumentalists which facilitated his writing for larger musical ensembles, including virtuoso instrumental groups. The incorporation of musical instrumental forces into the medium of multiple choirs, which in themselves represented opposing forces within antiphonal works, led to the development of the *concertato* style in composition: 'The spatial organization of a composition into two opposing bodies of sound was accentuated by the use of instruments together or in alternation with voices'.<sup>35</sup> By using the term *concertato* or *concerto*, (derived from *concertare*, meaning 'to compete'), reference was made to the combination of voices and instruments, rather than the competition between

---

<sup>31</sup> *Music in the Renaissance*, p. 418

<sup>32</sup> D.J. Grout & C.V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, (London, 1988), p. 339

<sup>33</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 20

<sup>34</sup> *New Oxford History of Music*, Vol. IV, p. 296

<sup>35</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 20

the groups. In the four years which Schütz spent in Venice, he must have had constant contact and involvement with the instrumental resources at St. Mark's, and would have absorbed much of what was being achieved through this combination of vocal and instrumental forces.

The use of instruments in combination with multiple-voiced choirs may thus be seen as a further step in the development of sound colour and texture, for just as antiphonal writing sought to enhance the brilliance and splendour of sound, the instrumental doubling of voices, or additional instrumental part-writing sought to add a further, new dimension to the textures and sonorities of the time. Bukofzer comments on this as follows: 'It is symptomatic, however, that the *concertato* style developed first in the many-voiced compositions of the Venetian school where the aid of instruments was needed first'.<sup>36</sup> Schütz's *Psalms of David* is therefore clearly significant as a model of the large-scale development of the polychoral idiom in Germany, and also as the introduction of *concertato* psalm-setting in that country.

Schütz, in the first preface to the *Psalms*, directly refers to the Venetian influence in this work '... I have composed some German psalms in the Italian manner into which I was carefully initiated by ... Gabrieli ...'.<sup>37</sup> In the second preface he points to another element in this work which he had derived from his training in Venice: 'I have arranged these present *Psalms* of mine in *stile recitativo* (to the present day almost unknown in Germany), which, in my opinion, is the most appropriate form for the composition of psalms ... I ... request that in presenting my *Psalms* they should not indulge in undue haste ... so that the words may be recited by the singers in a manner intelligible to the listeners'.<sup>38</sup> The term *stile recitativo* in this context refers to the principle of speech declamation which was applied in passages such as the following, where the choirs homorhythmically declaim the words 'for his mercy endureth forever':

---

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21

<sup>37</sup> *Heinrich Schütz, His Life and Work*, p. 290

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293

Example 21: Extract from *Psalm 136*, Heinrich Schütz

denn sei.ne Gü.te währet e.wiglich,      denn sei.ne Gü.te währet e.wiglich,  
 denn sei.ne Gü.te währet e.wiglich,      denn sei.ne Gü.te währet e.wiglich,  
 san,                      und gab ihr Land zum Er.be,                      zum Er.be seinem Knecht I.sra.  
 san,                      und gab ihr Land zum Er.be,                      zum Er.be seinem Knecht I.sra.  
 san,                      und gab ihr Land zum Er.be,                      zum Er.be seinem Knecht I.sra.  
 san,                      und gab ihr Land zum Er.be,                      zum Er.be seinem Knecht I.sra.

Solo passages also display the use of the *stile recitativo*, such as the following setting of 'See, He that keepeth Israel, slumbers not, nor sleeps':

Example 22: Extract from *Psalm 121*, Heinrich Schütz

schläft nicht.      *Vox sola.*      Sie - he, sie - he, sie - he der Hü.ter I.sra.el,  
 schläft nicht.      Sie - he, sie - he, sie - he der Hü.ter I.sra.el,  
 nicht,      schläft nicht.      nicht,      schläft nicht.  
 nicht,      schläft nicht.      nicht,      schläft nicht.  
 nicht,      schläft nicht.      nicht,      schläft nicht.  
 nicht,      schläft nicht.      nicht,      schläft nicht.  
 siehe der Hüter I.srael schläft noch schlummert nicht, schläft noch schlummert nicht, schläft noch schlummert nicht.

Of the twenty-six pieces in the *Psalms of David*, twenty are written as complete psalms, in the manner indicated by the title of the work. Four of the remaining six pieces only utilise portions of psalm texts, while the other two use texts from Jeremiah and Isaiah respectively. Specific reference is made to the form of these six pieces, which are summarised as follows: three concerts, two motets and one canzona. In the second preface to the work, Schütz gave specific directions regarding the manner in which the pieces are to be performed. He distinctly named two types of choir: on the one hand, there was the *coro favoritti* or favourite choir, which consisted of an ensemble of vocal or instrumental soloists. This group would have included the Kapellmeister's most advanced, and thus more favoured performers. On the other hand, there was the *Cappellen*, comprising the larger choirs or orchestras, which added sonority and brilliance to the total ensemble.<sup>39</sup> These specific guidelines by Schütz point to two significant aspects of his achievements in the *Psalms of David*. Firstly, he was developing the use of sonority and sound texture by juxtaposing, as well as amalgamating, the two contrasting choir bodies. Secondly, he was working towards differentiation between the manner of part-writing for solo as opposed to choral ensemble. 'He clearly evolved a stylistic differentiation between solo and choral ensemble, only tentatively suggested in Gabrieli's music'.<sup>40</sup> Examples of this stylistic awareness can be seen in the following extracts from *Psalm 150*; on the words 'lobet ihn mit Posaunen' ('praise him with the sound of the trumpet'), Schütz introduces a duet section sung by two voices from the solo ensemble, in which he employs a virtuoso-like coloratura motive in imitation to the trumpet's call. This passage only features in the *coro favoritti* parts, and is not repeated or doubled in the *capella* section.

Example 23: Extract from *Psalm 150*, Heinrich Schütz

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 290

<sup>40</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 90

The particular way in which Schütz writes for the solo ensemble can again be seen later in the piece, when both the *capella* as well as the *favoritti* sing the words 'lobet ihn mit Posaunen'. He allocates the trumpet motive with its quicker runs to the solo ensemble, while a slower note movement occurs in the *capella* parts.

Example 24: Extract from *Psalm 150*, Heinrich Schütz

Capella

Favoritti

As Rifkin points out, passages marked 'Vox sola', such as the following, where a solo voice sings a coloratura line with chordal instrumental accompaniment, would seem to indicate that Schütz must have been exposed to Italian monodic writing,<sup>41</sup> which featured the recitative-style solo melody with chordal accompaniment.

Example 25: Extract from *Psalm 121*, Heinrich Schütz

Vox sola.

Continuus.

<sup>41</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 17, p. 21

The instrumental part-writing in the *Psalms of David* is done in such a way that instrumental parts are interchangeable with the vocal ones. In this respect, the influence of the Renaissance tradition is still evident: 'The renaissance conception of musical structure was premised upon part-writing which embraced vocal and instrumental music alike ... consequently the voices of renaissance music could be performed vocally or instrumentally ... instrumental parts were often designated 'to be played or sung' although no words were given'.<sup>42</sup> Although the *Psalms of David* does not represent that period in Schütz's career where he displayed the beginnings of idiomatic writing for instruments, a progressive element presents itself in the fact that the *concertato* principle on which the work is based, requires the presence of voices as well as instruments to create the sound combination which the composer desired. In addition, two examples can be quoted to illustrate that there are instances where Schütz displays an awareness of instrumental character. The first such case appears in the passage shown in example 23. Here we find an indirect reference to the manner of a trumpet represented by the quaver runs on the word 'Posaunen'. The word-painting which Schütz employed at this point compelled him, as it were, to write a passage which could be associated with the playing of a trumpet. However, it remains a vocal reference to the instrument. The second example appears in the same psalm, in the parts designated 'Cornet or Violin' and 'Cornet or Flute', which imitate each other with short, rapid motives while accompanying the solo voice from the *favoritti*. The instrumental effect which should be achieved in this passage would call for instrumental rather than vocal execution.

Example 26: Extract from *Psalms 150*, Heinrich Schütz

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The first staff is a vocal line with lyrics: 'lobet ihn, lobet ihn'. The second and third staves are instrumental parts with lyrics: 'mit Sai.ten und Pfeifen, mit Sai.ten und Pfei.fen, lobet'. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals, with some notes beamed together to indicate rapid passages.

<sup>42</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 13

Another element in the *Psalms of David* which foreshadows later Baroque developments is the extensive use of chordal harmonic textures, coupled with a clear rhythmic organization. A continuous development was taking place in music with regard to the dominance of metrical rhythm, from the time of the renaissance polyphony to the mature baroque.<sup>43</sup> In Schütz's *Psalms* one is able to observe the interaction of *stile recitativo* (homorhythmic declamation), chordal writing and metrical rhythm. Where the recitative style is used, its character ensures that a homophonic texture is created, as in the following example:

Example 27: Extract from *Psalm 98*, Heinrich Schütz

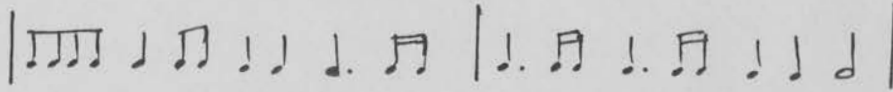
The musical score consists of two systems, each with five staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the four staves below it represent the instrumental ensemble. The lyrics are: "denn er kömmt, das Erd.reich zu rich - ten." and "fröh - lich für dem Herrn, denn er kömmt, das Erd.reich zu rich - ten." The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The bass line is marked with a '♯' and a 'u'.

The marked rhythmic organization, however, is not only demonstrated in chordal passages, but also in contrapuntal sections. In the following extract, the strong accentuation, combined with the manner in which the voices enter with the theme or sections thereof, gives it a rhythmic vitality reminiscent of Bach and Handel.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13

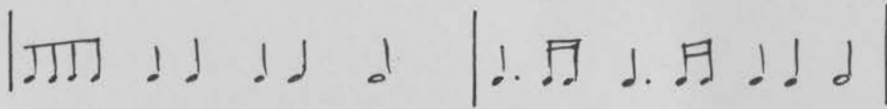


## Example 30a:



Later in the piece, a very similar rhythmic pattern occurs on the words 'Ehre sei dem Vater und dem Sohn' ('glory be to the Father and the Son'). The resemblance in this instance is also quoted by Moser,<sup>44</sup> to illustrate the thematic relation which often exists between a psalm and its concluding doxology.

## Example 30b:



Rhythm is often also employed to reinforce the element of contrast. The passage from the twenty-third psalm quoted in example 12, where the affective use of a motive appears, at the same time also presents us with an instance where a change of rhythm coincides with a contrasting change in the textual meaning. After the reference to the potential threat of 'death's dark vale of shadows', a change of time-signature occurs at the point where the implied gloom of that phrase is contradicted by the positive statement 'then will I fear no evil'.

Example 31: Extract from *Psalm 23*, Heinrich Schütz

Example 31 is a musical score for Heinrich Schütz's *Psalm 23*. It features a vocal line (Soprano) and a lute line. The lyrics are in German and are repeated across four staves. The music is in a minor key and features a change in time signature from 3/4 to 2/4.

Lyrics: und ob ich schon wandert im fin-steren Thal des To-des, fürcht ich kein Unglück, fürcht ich

<sup>44</sup> Heinrich Schütz, *His Life and Work*, p. 297

With regard to Schütz's use of time-signatures, Moser states the following: 'It is ... of fundamental importance ... with all of Schütz's compositions that he ordinarily recognizes 'C' and '3' as measures of time only - 'C' for slow and '3' for fast'.<sup>45</sup> The faster rhythm in triple meter would tend to be associated with a more positive and happy textual message. In view of this fact, it is somewhat surprising to hear the words 'death dark vale of shadows' to be sung to 3-pulse time, as one would expect a similar treatment of the text to the manner in which the contrasting concepts of sowing in tears, and reaping in joy, are treated (see examples 16b and 17b). One could perhaps interpret this as another instance of reverse symbolism on the part of the composer, who with the use of a faster rhythm creates the opposite atmosphere to that of the inherent sombreness of the spoken words.

The *Psalms of David* features another important element of baroque music after Schütz, namely the *basso continuo*. All of the twenty-six pieces in this work include the figured bass in their score. This tendency was symptomatic of the way in which the function of the soprano and bass lines was developing in the early baroque period. A polarisation of these two voices was taking place, whereby they assumed prominence in terms of their harmonic and melodic function, while the inner voices served to fill the harmonic space which existed between the two outer voices. Grout refers to it as the 'isolation of the bass and treble as the two essential lines of the texture, and the seeming indifference to the inner parts as lines'.<sup>46</sup> The scoring of the *basso continuo* part therefore reflected the importance of the bass line and the relative unimportance of the inner voices by the writing of a clearly notated bass line, with mere numeric figures to represent the inner voices. As a result, no two continuo players would have executed the figured harmonies in exactly the same way, and this flexibility of performance was also indicative of the subordinate harmonic role played by the middle voices.

Now that the task of providing the harmonic foundation had been assigned to the continuo, the melody itself was less bound by contrapuntal considerations, and allowed for more freedom in the way that it could be developed or elaborated upon. The foundation was laid herewith for the future use of monody, such as in the *Symphoniae*

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 297-8

<sup>46</sup> *A History of the Western Music*, p. 352



A last point of significance to be mentioned in connection with the *Psalms of David* is, of course, the use of the German language, and the way in which the work has been influenced by the expressive demands of the text, as well as the character of German speech. Schütz's pictorial expression of the text, and the significance of the text with regard to form and rhythm, have been discussed earlier, together with the ideological impetus, derived from his background, for his employment of the vernacular. His ability to fuse the essence of the text with music of the highest order is described by Bukofzer as follows: 'Schütz's accomplished in the *Psalmen Davids* ... as perfect a union of words and music in the German language as Purcell did in the English language'.<sup>48</sup> Although his music constantly reveals the impact of the word, it is more than merely a vehicle for textual communication; it reaches for the highest artistic standards in itself. An indication of Schütz's view of the importance of music in its own right is gained from his comment in describing the madrigal as 'the poetic genre most perfectly suited to the creation of an artfully wrought composition', and he says further: 'I myself have scraped together a little volume of sundry poems, and I know best what trouble it cost me before I could shape it into music even approximately in the Italian manner'.<sup>49</sup>

That the *Psalms of David* was not only a landmark in the development of sacred music in the early seventeenth century, but a work which had set a standard for future generations, is expressed by Moser's comment on what had been accomplished with this work: 'His Psalms of 1619 make it clear that he was the greatest composer of psalm settings in the history of music'.<sup>50</sup>

#### E. THE *GEISTLICHE CHORMUSIK* (1648)

The *Geistliche Chormusik* is a collection of twenty-nine motets for five, six and seven voices, which Schütz had dedicated to the city councillors of Leipzig, and thereby to the choir of St Thomas', of whom the councillors were

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 90

<sup>49</sup> J. Rifkin, *Towards a New Image of Henrich Schütz*, (Musical times, Great Britain, 1985), p. 657

<sup>50</sup> *Heinrich Schütz, His Life and Work*, p. XII

the trustees. Three aspects of the work are indicated in the preface by Schütz himself, namely the 1) promoting of *a capella* singing; 2) reluctant use of the *basso continuo*, and 3) reverting to the old-fashioned polyphonic style.

1. The *a capella* element of the *Geistliche Chormusik* was highlighted by Schütz when he, in his dedication of the work to the Leipzig councillors, commended the fact that the city of Leipzig had always cultivated and maintained the art of *a capella* song.<sup>51</sup> Although the work contains four pieces in which Schütz provided instrumental parts, the definite reference to choir music in the title, combined with the composer's comment regarding the choir in Leipzig, suggests that his intentions were that most of the pieces should be performed unaccompanied. Schütz's obvious support for the concept of *a capella* singing could be viewed as a progressive feature in this work, in that, unlike the harmonic style of the *Geistliche Chormusik*, which harked back to that of the renaissance, the *a capella* idiom was more representative of the baroque. Bukofzer says in this regard:

'It was the baroque composer who developed the idiomatic characteristics of voice and instrument, and it was he who deployed them first in the *concertato* style of the early baroque. With his flair for coloristic effects, he also discovered the sensuous appeal of the a-capella chorus ... Since doubling the voices was a common practice among renaissance composers, they obviously did not yet fully recognize this appeal of the medium. The a-capella ideal, which finds its most dignified expression in the *stile antico*, was a creation of the baroque'.<sup>52</sup>

It could therefore be said that Schütz took a step in the direction of the above ideal in his *Geistliche Chormusik*, in spite of the fact that the instrumental doubling of voices was an option. The pieces can be grouped into two types:<sup>53</sup> 1) the chorus type, in which the parts are vocally performed, with optional

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 193

<sup>52</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 14

<sup>53</sup> *Heinrich Schütz, His Life and Work*, p. 584

instrumental support or substitution, and 2) the concertato-like type, where the vocal and instrumental parts are clearly separated.

2. Regarding the use of the *basso continuo*, Schütz states the following in the preface: '... no-one can rightly attempt other manners of composition ... unless he already had sufficient practice in the style without basso continuo ...'. Further on, he says: 'I have thus been induced to undertake once again the small work of this sort without basso continuo ...'.<sup>54</sup> However, he in the end published the work with *basso continuo*, which, he indicated, was the result of external influence. The view held by Schütz with regard to the thorough-bass in this work, is directly related to his use of the older contrapuntal style of writing, discussed under point 3.
  
3. The prime objective of the *Geistliche Chormusik* was, according to Schütz, to encourage the younger generation of German composers to strive for complete mastery of the contrapuntal technique, which he felt was being neglected in favour of the concerted style of composition with *basso continuo*, as a result of the Italian influence in Germany.<sup>55</sup> When one considers that Schütz, as a young composer, himself had been a very powerful representative in Germany of the concertato style, and later of the monodic and *concitato*<sup>56</sup> style of Monteverdi, one realises with what seriousness he must have approached this work. While by no means intending to bring the Italian style into disrepute, he aimed at producing a work which not only exemplified the foundations of compositional technique, but which would help to cultivate a truly German character. The *Geistliche Chormusik* is unique among the works of Schütz by virtue of its educational intent. Rifkin describes a specific set of circumstances that provided the impetus for the production of this work, namely a dispute between the Danzig organist Paul Siefert and the Warsaw choirmaster Marco Scacchi on

---

<sup>54</sup> *Towards a New Image of Henrich Schütz*, p. 717

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 717

<sup>56</sup> The *concitato* style was used to express what Monteverdi defined as one of the principal affections of the human mind, namely anger, or agitation. It was characterised by the use of repetitive semiquavers (ref. *Source Readings in Music History*, p. 53).

the issue of contrapuntal proficiency.<sup>57</sup> Schütz was drawn into the dispute, and found himself obliged to express an opinion on the contrapuntal standards which were being debated. In the preface to the *Geistliche Chormusik*, Schütz expressed the hope that Scacchi would soon produce a valuable treatise on counterpoint, which Schütz in all probability expected to serve a similar purpose to that of the *Geistliche Chormusik*.

#### *Progressive elements*

In spite of the fact that Schütz intended giving the work a retrospective character, it displays certain features which look ahead rather than to the past. In this respect, Schütz was adopting an approach which Blume describes as follows: 'Instinctively the composers who carried on the "stile alla Palestrina" adapted to it the changing melodic and harmonic sensibilities of their time'.<sup>58</sup>

One important aspect, namely the representation of the words, has been discussed in the section on text-settings. In this connection, one could at this point once more refer to those features in the context of the *Geistliche Chormusik*: affective textual representation, text declamation, and the influence of the text on formal structure. In conformity with the Lutheran character of this work, the expression of the text is one of its most important aspects, and Schütz performs his task as interpreter of the word like he does in his other compositions, but within a polyphonic context.

By looking at the motet 'Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt', a number of other features may also be illustrated:

- 1) A chordal movement of voices can be observed in many sections of the motet. In the first phrase, the soprano, alto and bass proceed with exactly the same rhythm. Despite the fact that the two tenor voices have slightly different rhythmic patterns, it is clear that the harmony has been chordally conceived.

---

<sup>57</sup> *Towards a New Image of Henrich Schütz*, p. 717

<sup>58</sup> *Renaissance & Baroque Music*, p. 120





Example 37b:

wer - - - den, son-dern das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge  
 wer - - - den, son-dern das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge  
 - - - - - den, son-dern das e - wi - ge Le - ben,  
 - ren wer - den, son-dern das e - wi - ge Le - ben, son-dern das  
 wer - - - - - den, son-dern das e - wi - ge Le - ben.

However, there is also to be found, as the next example shows, a concealed grouping of three pulses, which Moser has pointed out.<sup>59</sup> One could here again refer to the association of the 3-pulse rhythm with the more positive, joyful textual message, such as the text of this example:

Example 38:

Aria 31VV 380  
 Al - so, al - so hat Gott die Welt ge - liebt, daß er sei - nen ein -  
 Al - so, al - so hat Gott die Welt ge - liebt, daß er sei - nen ein -  
 Al - so, al - so hat Gott die Welt ge - liebt, daß er sei - nen  
 Al - so, al - so hat Gott die Welt ge - liebt, daß er sei - nen ein -  
 Al - so, al - so hat Gott die Welt ge - liebt, daß er sei - nen ein -  
 ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen, ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ge - bor - nen Sohn, daß er sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen, ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,

On the one hand, the piece has sections of rhythm which are quite free, displaying a more renaissance-like character, as can be seen in example 39a. On the other hand, the definite pulse of Baroque rhythm can be felt on the words 'sondern das ewige Leben' (example 39b):

Example 39a:

ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen, ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ge - bor - nen Sohn, daß er sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen, ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,  
 ge - bor - nen Sohn, sei - nen ein - ge - bor - nen Sohn gab,

<sup>59</sup> Heinrich Schütz, *His Life and Work*, p. 591

## Example 39b:

wer - - den son-der-n das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge  
 Le - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben.  
 wer - - den, son-der-n das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge  
 Le - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben.  
 - den son-der-n das e - wi - ge Le - ben, son-der-n das  
 das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben.  
 - ren wer - den, son-der-n das e - wi - ge Le - ben, son-der-n das  
 e - wi - ge, e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben.  
 wer - - den son-der-n das e - wi - ge Le - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben, das e - wi - ge Le - ben ha - ben.

- 4) Finally, the form of the piece is also noteworthy, as it constitutes a setting of the text in the form of an aria of the structure //:A://:B://:c. Moser points out that this is unusual in view of the fact that the text is not a metrical poem, but a piece of biblical prose. It was not the norm for prose to be set to music of a formal, set structure, and Schütz herewith displayed an ability to adapt the text to the form of the piece. As Moser put it, Schütz was able 'to transform prose to formal music'.<sup>60</sup>

This achievement by Schütz may be considered to be another feature which pointed towards future developments in vocal music. One could illustrate this by looking at an instance where Handel set a piece of biblical prose in the form of an aria, namely 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd' from the Messiah. In this piece he uses text phrases which do not share the same metre, in such a way that the thematic and structural presentation of these phrases form a musically unified whole. An example of this can be seen in the following two extracts, where the two phrases, though accented quite differently in their spoken form, are set to a practically identical rhythmic and melodic pattern.

Example 40a: Extract from *He shall feed His flock like a shepherd*, G.F. Handel

A  
 He shall feed His flock like a shep - - herd, and

<sup>60</sup> Heinrich Schütz, *His Life and Work*, p. 591-2

Example 40b: Extract from *He shall feed His flock like a shepherd*, G.F.Handel

## F. CONCLUSION

Although *Psalms of David* and the *Geistliche Chormusik* by no means represent all of Schütz's achievements as a composer, they are able to provide considerable insight into numerous aspects of his work. Like most of his other works, the role played by Schütz as a Protestant composer is clearly illustrated by these two, and they also symbolise another feature of his career, namely the gradual development from an artistic freedom as a young composer to a religious conservatism in his later works. In discussing the *Psalms of David* of 1619, Moser refers to this symbolic connection as follows:

'The master of 1619 still remains predominantly under the sway of the Italian Renaissance point of view of art for art's sake. It was a long road that he put behind him before emerging as a composer of the Gospel stories and the Passions and the German cantor of the *Geistliche Chormusik* of 1648 - the road which led from the Parnassian fields of the "free artist" to the voluntary restraint of the great master of the middle baroque church music'.<sup>61</sup>

Yet even when Schütz committed himself to a more restrained approach, the artistic drive is still evident in his approach to the chorale, which is not represented in abundance in his works. This under-representation of the chorale was an unusual trait for a Lutheran composer. It points, however, to the notion that Schütz, though firmly committed to serving the religious intentions of the text in his music, still chose to fulfil this function in a

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 299

manner which could accommodate the application of his own artistic and creative powers. Where the extensive use of the chorale tended to restrict composers to an objective presentation of the text, Schütz subordinated it to free, subjective composition.<sup>62</sup>

Having considered Schütz's treatment of word and music in the two works which have been discussed, one may conclude that the word was the central theme around which he developed the formal, stylistic, harmonic and dramatic elements of music. Furthermore, he developed these elements after he had assimilated them by being exposed to old and new currents in European, and especially Italian, composition. This not only led to his development of church music in Germany to the level which justifies the general historical view of him as being the greatest German composer before J.S.Bach; it also enabled him to become a major force in the general development of music from the late renaissance to the mature baroque.

---

---

<sup>62</sup> *Music in the Baroque Era*, p. 83

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abraham, Gerald (ed.), *The New Oxford History of Music; The Age of Humanism, 1540-1630*, Vol. IV; London, 1968
- Arnold, Denis, *Gabrieli, Giovanni*, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 7, ed. by Sadie, Stanley; London, 1980
- Arnold, Denis, *Monteverdi, Claudio*, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol. 12, ed. by Sadie, Stanley; London, 1980
- Arnold, Denis, *The Second Venetian Visit of Heinrich Schütz*, from *The Musical Quarterly*, 1985, No.3. New York
- Blume, Friedrich, *Renaissance & Baroque Music*, London, 1975
- Bukofzer, Manfred F, *Music in the Baroque Era*, London, 1948
- Cook, Larry, *Form and Style in the Musicalische Exequien by Heinrich Schütz*, from *Choral journal*, 1988, Vol.29, Part 2
- Donington, Robert, *The Interpretation of Early Music*, London, 1974
- Fain, Janice M, *Text-setting in the Music of Heinrich Schütz*, from *Choral journal*, 1987, Vol.27, Part 7
- Fenlon, Iain, (ed.), *The Renaissance*, London, 1989
- Grout, Donald Jay & Palisca, Claude V., *A History of Western Music*, 4th ed., London, 1988
- Harman, Alec, & Milner, Anthony, *Man and His Music, The Story of Musical Experience in the West*, Part Two, London, 1969
- Moser, Hans Joachim, *Heinrich Schutz, His Life and Work*, Translated from the Second Revised Edition by Pfatteicher, Carl F., Saint Louis, 1959
- Parry, C.Hubert H., *The Music of the Seventeenth Century* in *The Oxford History of Music*, Vol. III, 2nd ed., London, 1938
- Palisca, Claude V., *Baroque Music*, New Jersey, 1968
- Radice, Mark A., *Heinrich Schütz and the foundations of the Stile Recitativo in Germany*, from *Bach: the quarterly of the Riemenscheider Bach Institute*, 1985, Vol. 16, Part 4
- Reese, Gustave, *Music in the Renaissance*, Revised ed., London, 1954
- Rifkin, Joshua, *Heinrich Schütz*, in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Vol.17, ed. by Sadie, Stanley; London, 1980
- Rifkin, Josua, *Towards a New Image of Henrich Schütz*, from *Musical times*, 1985, Vol. 126, Parts 1713/1714

Robertson, Alec & Stevens, Denis (ed.), *The Pelican History of Music*, Vol. 2, London, 1963

Steinitz, Paul, *German Church Music*, in *The New Oxford History of Music: Opera and Church Music, 1630-1750*,  
Vol. V; ed. by Lewis, Anthony & Fortune, Nigel; London, 1975

Strunk, Oliver, (ed.), *Source Readings in Music History, The Baroque Era*, New York, 1965

---